TOP SECRET

19 April 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Postponement of Detachment A Deployment

1. You should be aware of the steps that have already been taken looking toward the deployment of Detachment A at the end of this month as presently scheduled. Briefly, these are as follows:

25X1C a. Two advance echelons, totaling about 18 men, have already moved to [redacted]

b. All primary mission pilots have been sent on predeployment leave. They are scheduled for five days of "E & E" training at [redacted] 25X1A beginning about 1 May and will not return to [redacted] 25X1A

c. A majority of other Detachment A personnel are taking predeployment leave in rotation prior to reassembly at [redacted] 25X1A on 27 April 25X1C for the move to [redacted]

d. Two of Detachment A's four primary mission aircraft have already been disassembled and others may be disassembled in the next few days.

e. With the help of a crew from Headquarters and of personnel on loan from the suppliers, the packing and crating of Detachment A Fly-Away Kits and Unit Mission Equipment, and the assembly of these items into aircraft loads, are now proceeding at [redacted] 25X1A

f. Airlift involving two C-118's and ten C-124's has been scheduled by MATS and SAC with the first units to depart [redacted] 25X1A on Sunday, 29 April, and the last on Sunday, 6 May.

2. It goes without saying that any delay in the deployment date would cause major dislocation in these activities. Moreover, under the most favorable circumstances, it would be virtually impossible to reassemble

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Detachment A and reinitiate operations at [redacted] with the personnel and equipment of that detachment prior to 1 May. Thus, the two weeks allowed for dismantling of equipment and preparation for loading would be lost in the event of any significant postponement of deployment since no training or flight testing would be possible with Detachment A personnel and equipment during that period. The loss could not be retrieved because approximately the same period would be required for the same purposes prior to a later deployment. 25X1A

3. An additional price would be paid in the event of postponement in the form of interference with the schedule for Detachment B. Some 90 per cent of the personnel of that detachment are now scheduled to arrive in [redacted] by 7 May. The training of the first two Detachment B pilots is due to begin on 23 April. This major movement of personnel and at least a considerable part of the pilot training activities for Detachment B would have to be postponed until the later departure date of Detachment A, since [redacted] could not accommodate both groups. 25X1A 25X1A 25X1A

4. The most serious consequence I fear if a postponement should be directed is a serious impairment of morale. The personnel of Detachment A have been working toward the present date as an objective for several months. They believe they are ready to go and they are aware that this belief is shared both by the senior officers of SAC and by senior officers in USAF Headquarters. They have been working for many months under the pressure of a sense of urgency which has caused a great deal to be accomplished in a short time. A postponement of operations for what would appear to them to be insufficient cause would make it extremely difficult to maintain their motivation. This factor can not be taken lightly. One of its tangible consequences might be some loss of contractor personnel.

5. Especially in the light of the above considerations, the purposes to be served by a postponement should be carefully defined so that the desired results may be obtained in the most efficient manner. Presumably, a postponement would be directed if it was believed (a) that aircraft, and more particularly engine, performance has not yet been demonstrated to be sufficiently reliable and (b) that further flight testing of the aircraft should be conducted in the ZI rather than overseas. Accordingly, the purpose to be served would be to demonstrate that the Detachment A pilots can fly the U-2 aircraft with the P-37 engine without flame-outs.

6. There is no doubt that this result could be achieved most efficiently by deploying the detachment on schedule and then conducting a sufficient number of shake-down flights over friendly territory from [redacted] Such a procedure

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would have many advantages. It would test personnel, procedures, equipment, and communications in the environment in which combat missions will later be flown. It would familiarize pilots with the approaches to their operational base. By no means the least advantage is that an opportunity would be afforded to demonstrate [redacted] the reliability of the weapons system and thus to render them more willing to permit combat missions to be launched from their territory. If the shake-down period were long drawn out, security would be less well maintained at [redacted] than at [redacted] but it is believed that the two weeks of flying would be sufficient to demonstrate the reliability of the equipment, unless unknown and unsuspected defects should appear. Remoteness from the Lockheed and Pratt-Whitney plants is not a serious matter, since we are well past the stage at which any technical modifications or adjustments of either airframe or engine are contemplated or even under study. All that remains to be tested in operation are certain pre-flight and in-flight procedures which can as well be tested at [redacted]

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7. The above course of action may seem unwise on the ground that, once Detachment A is in place, pressure will be generated to undertake combat operations, perhaps before reliability has been proved. It is submitted that, if this danger is well understood in advance by all concerned, it can be avoided. To do so it is necessary to establish a standard which must be met prior to the undertaking of combat operations and then to enforce the standard. It is submitted that all concerned, including notably the Detachment Commander and his pilots, will have every reason to pass a reasonable test before incurring the grave risk of operations over enemy territory and that there will therefore be far less pressure to undertake such operations prematurely than there is to carry through with the scheduled deployment.

8. A final consideration which further reduces the danger that an early deployment will generate pressures for premature and dangerous operations is that the transition from test missions over friendly territory to full scale combat operations can and should be a gradual one. Before any actual overflights of enemy territory, several missions might be flown at altitude but within range of enemy radar for the purpose of testing out enemy radar capabilities. The next logical step would be a number of combat missions over satellite territory. Initially these could even be within gliding range of friendly territory. It will be possible in this way to probe enemy defenses while still avoiding major risk, accumulating further experience with the primary mission aircraft, and building up the confidence of the

pilots. It is submitted that this is the most efficient way to satisfy ourselves and to demonstrate to others the reliability of the weapons system.

/s/

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Project Director

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